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INNER PEACE

"I suppose I should have felt thankful and lucky," relates Feivel S. about his involvement in the rehabilitation of displaced Jews in post-war Europe. "I found it difficult to be optimistic about life after having lost everything in the Holocaust. An old friend of mine found me a job in the Vaad HaHatzala (Rescue Council) offices in Paris. The constant workload my position required helped me maintain my sanity.

"Sitting behind a big gray desk piled with papers, files, and forms, I found both solace and misery: solace in being in a position to help others reconstruct their lives, constant misery while listening to tale after tale of woe.

"One day, I heard a gentle knock at the door to my office. This was a pleasant change from the familiar nervous rapping of troubled survivors.

"Come in,' I called.

"A well-dressed, bearded man walked up to my desk. I was deeply impressed from the first moment I saw him. His distinguished features radiated inner peace. That overwhelmed me, for in post-war Europe inner peace was a very rare commodity. Moreover, his peaceful composure was catchy, and for the first time in years, I felt at ease.

"How can I help you?' I asked.

"My mother, **Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson**, has arrived here from Russia. I have come to facilitate her immigration to the United States. Can you please advise me how much time I will have to set aside for this procedure? I would like to organize my schedule accordingly."

"I could not take my eyes off this soft-spoken man. He was the first person to come through my office who radiated a sense of direction, expressing the desire to calculate time and spend it wisely. In the shambles of a chaotic Europe, here was a man who valued his minutes.

"I promised to offer whatever assistance I could, assuring him that I would try to process the necessary papers myself so that he could be free to use his time as he saw fit. I gave him all the forms that had to be filled out, and he supplied all the information required.

Afterwards, he expressed his gratitude and left my office. Though I had not said so, I was also grateful to him. The few minutes he had spent with me endowed me with renewed dedication and sense of purpose.

"Many years passed. In the interim, I married, built a family and immigrated to the States. One day, I was driving through Brooklyn with a co-worker. 'Let's go visit the Lubavitch headquarters,' he suggested.

"Why not?' I replied. Seventeen years had passed since that incident in Paris. Although I had never gone to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe, I had since learned that he was the man who had visited my office then, and that meeting was still etched in my memory.

"We arrived at 770 in the midst of a '*farbrengen*' - a Chasidic gathering with thousands in attendance. I marveled at the sight: an atmosphere of spiritual intensity in sharp contrast to the ordinary American environment. I looked around slowly, shifting my eyes periodically from the Rebbe to the chasidim.

"Suddenly, I caught the Rebbe's eye...or was it that he caught mine? He was looking at me directly, while he motioned to one of his attendants and said something to him. Before I knew it, the attendant was beside me.

'The Rebbe has requested that you come to him,' he whispered to me. I was both surprised and flustered at the unexpected attention.

"I followed the attendant shakily and found myself face to face with the Rebbe. It was the same warm and eloquent voice that echoed in my ears from seventeen years ago.

"*Yasher Ko'ach* ['well done'] for your efforts on behalf of my mother seventeen years ago in Paris. Blessing and thanks for everything you did."

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Source: From "*To Know and to Care*" by Rabbi Eliyahu and Malka Touger, as reprinted in *Living Jewish* #431 and adapted by Yerachmiel tilles.